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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Revised estimates under section 1, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination, section 32, Staff assessment, and income section 1, Income from staff assessment

Eleventh report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates under section 1, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination, section 32, Staff assessment, and income section 1, Income from staff assessment (A/C.5/50/40). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. As stated in paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report, it is proposed that a temporary post at the Under-Secretary-General level be approved for the Special Adviser for the biennium 1996-1997; the related costs are estimated at $352,200, with an additional appropriation of $92,800 under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. The functions of the post are broadly outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report.

3. During the biennium 1994-1995, the Secretary-General believed that, owing to the ad hoc evolving nature of the responsibilities and assignments entrusted to the Special Adviser, the related remuneration should be made available from the commitment authority granted to the Secretary-General in General Assembly resolution 48/229 of 23 December 1993 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenditures. However, the Advisory Committee, in its third report (A/50/7/Add.2) pointed out that the resolution was not intended to cover the establishment of positions on a continuing basis and that positions which are required for the performance of functions of a continuing nature in the work of the United Nations should be budgeted in the United Nations regular budget for

review and approval by the General Assembly through the Committee. The Secretary-General's revised estimates for the biennium 1996-1997 for this purpose are submitted in response to that comment of the Committee.

4. The Advisory Committee notes a lack of clarity on the coordination role of the Special Adviser vis-à-vis the coordination functions entrusted to certain heads of departments and programmes. In this connection, the Committee recalls its comments in the context of its examination of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 (A/48/7) and the biennium 1996-1997 (A/50/7) to the effect that care should be taken to ensure that there is no duplication with the work of other secretariat units, departments or programmes and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

5. The Advisory Committee also raised questions with regard to other special adviser posts such as those associated with the organization and coordination of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. In the opinion of the Committee, care should be taken not to continue those posts beyond their mandates. The Committee recommends that, when considering whether to appoint additional advisers at the Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General level, the Secretary-General should bear in mind the often-repeated need to reduce and keep to a minimum the number of high-level posts.

6. On the basis of its comments and observations in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of a temporary post at the Under-Secretary-General level, as requested by the Secretary-General, and that such additional appropriation as may be required be reflected in the performance report for the biennium 1996-1997.